

## **Abstract**

This master's thesis deals with the issue of work experiences and employment of individuals with schizophrenia. Research indicates that engagement in work activities can have a positive impact on the course of the illness, but employment is significantly more challenging for individuals with schizophrenia compared to the general population. Although most individuals with schizophrenia are interested in being employed, only a small proportion of them succeed in the long term. In the Czech context, this is a relatively unexplored issue, therefore there is a lack of knowledge about how people with schizophrenia experience their employment and what difficulties they face. The aim of this master's thesis is to further explore the work experiences of individuals with schizophrenia and to determine what specific factors they perceive as supportive or limiting for their involvement in paid employment.

The theoretical part of the thesis is divided into two main chapters, with the first one focusing on schizophrenia itself including its symptoms, prognosis, diagnosis, and the impacts of stigma. The subject of the second chapter is the possibilities of employment for individuals with schizophrenia, particularly the benefits associated with work, support mechanisms for this group, and their needs. The theoretical part is followed by empirical qualitative research.

The aim of the research conducted through interviews framed within the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was to answer the main research question: What are the experiences of individuals with schizophrenia regarding employment? In total, 9 research interviews were conducted, of which 7 were utilized for analysis. Within the analysis, 4 main themes were identified: Relationship to the illness; Not just being a disability pensioner; When I'm tired, then the voices come; Peer support. The results of the research suggest that employment can be associated with a number of benefits, and therefore, employment can be understood as part of the recovery process. However, the analysis also highlights the risk of worsening psychotic difficulties due to excessively demanding employment. The results of the analysis thus emphasize the importance of creating suitable conditions and support for individuals with schizophrenia to be able to successfully perform their work without exposing themselves to an increased risk of disease relapse. Such suitable conditions are already being created, especially within peer positions, which are experiencing a period of significant development in the context of mental health care reform.

**Key words:** Schizophrenia, Employment of individuals with mental illness, Peer worker, Interpretative phenomenological analysis, Qualitative research